



## STATE OF IOWA

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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
KEVIN W. CONCANNON, DIRECTOR

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# Child Welfare Contractors To Have More Flexibility, Incentives

**DES MOINES, Iowa**—The Iowa Department of Human Services Monday announced the selection of regional social service agencies to provide child welfare services in a system that will grant contractors more flexibility and reward them for results.

The agencies competed to provide services in each of eight DHS administrative regions, and negotiations will begin soon with winners in seven of those areas. DHS officials decided not to select an apparent winner in a southwest Iowa area and will instead re-issue a bid for proposals there.

In the current setup, the DHS contracts with scores of social work agencies, some of them very small, to provide counseling and other services for families in which children are at risk of abuse. DHS workers determine how many half-hour “units” of service are needed, and they then find an agency to do the work.

“We have outstanding agencies across the state and they do good work, but we need a system that spends less time on process and more on results,” said DHS Director Kevin Concannon.

In the new system, DHS social workers will retain case management and oversee progress through regular visits to each child and family, but it will be up to the contracted agency to determine the type of service to support the family and how to deliver it.

For the first time, the contractors will have a financial stake in the outcome.

Contractors will be paid a flat monthly rate for service to families, but there will also be incentives for reaching goals such as preventing re-abuse and safely reuniting children with families in a timely manner. Iowa and other states are tested against the same measures by federal officials.

“By giving more autonomy to the people who actually provide the counseling and other services, and by rewarding outstanding performance, I believe we’re going to keep kids safer and develop stronger families,” Concannon said.

The new system will not eliminate smaller social service agencies; many will subcontract with the regional agency. The bidding procedure required regional contractors to secure agreements with as many smaller agencies as needed to assure coverage throughout the entire geographic area.

Currently, the DHS spends about \$29 million on contracted child welfare services. Officials expect the total will be about the same under the new system.

In some regions, there are two successful bidders. The DHS will alternate referrals in those areas. Also, the two most populous regions, Des Moines and Cedar Rapids, were split in two.

Negotiations will begin soon with these agencies:

- Ames service area; Children and Families of Iowa (CFI), based in Des Moines.
- Cedar Rapids service area, north; Four Oaks of Cedar Rapids, and Tanager Place of Cedar Rapids.
- Cedar Rapids service area, south; CFI of Des Moines, and First Resources Corp., Ottumwa.
- Council Bluffs service area, no successful bidder.
- Davenport service area; Family Resources Inc., Davenport; and Mid-Iowa Family Therapy Clinic, Perry.
- Des Moines service area north; CFI of Des Moines, and Mid-Iowa Family Therapy.
- Des Moines service area south, CFI of Des Moines.
- Dubuque service area; Families First Counseling Services of Waterloo, and Lutheran Services in Iowa of Des Moines.
- Sioux City service area, Boys and Girls Home Residential Treatment Centers, Inc., of Sioux City.
- Waterloo service area, Mid-Iowa Family Therapy and Lutheran Services in Iowa of Des Moines.

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